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Yes We Can

Beginning in the early 1940's, the Grand Lodge of North Carolina showed a membership gain for about forty consecutive years, eventually attaining a membership high of just over 73,000. Then began our steady decline which has now totalled approximately 3,000 members.

What were we doing during those forty years of gains that we have not done since?

Well, some lodges were going one way and the rest were going other ways, just as they are now and always will. This is not only inevitable, but it is desirable. What works in one area will not necessarily work in another, and what appeals to one type of man will not appeal to another. But all the lodges that were growing during those forty years did have some things in common, as did all areas of the state.

One circumstance that hits you in the face when you study the annual statistics is the fact that during the growth years we were constituting a sizeable number of new lodges. New lodges almost always grow, and in most instances the ranks of their charter members include some who were members of lodges in other states and who may not ever have become North Carolina members but for the opportunity to be part of a new lodge. Every time we form a new lodge, we provide opportunity for eleven additional Masons to become lodge officers. Just think how discouraging it is for Masons in a lodge of six, seven or eight hundred members to contemplate their chances of ever being a lodge officer, and how eagerly they might grasp an opportunity to become a member of a new lodge which is only thirty or forty Masons strong.

Our average lodge membership is about 177 Masons. Suppose we formed 200 new lodges while retaining our present total membership . . . our average lodge membership would still be about 117 and we would have created 2,200 additional lodge officers. You think this would not supercharge the Masonic atmosphere in North Carolina?

We are not going to form 200 new lodges anytime soon, but we do need to create some new ones each year. Many of our lodges that total several hundred members experience no better attendance than some lodges one-tenth their size, so they have a great number of members that are dormant. Many of those dormant members could be activated if they were in smaller lodges with an opportunity to truly participate. New lodges will not only spur growth, they will enliven what we already have.

And there are some things we can make sure we are doing properly in order to encourage membership growth.

We cannot sustain growth if we do not have good ritualistic performance. By their proficiency, by their dress, and by their obvious dedication to what they are doing, Masons can favorably impress their candidates to the extent that many or most of them will become productive members; whereas, if our degree work and our attire is sloppy, and if we give the impression that our main objective is to hurry up and get through with what we are doing, the candidate is certainly not going to be favorably impressed by what he has seen of Masonry and is not likely to seriously interest himself in it.

While it is proper that we honor and respect our older members that have contributed so much to Masonry over the years, we need to and must get our younger members into the chairs and committees and other work of the lodge if we expect to hold their interest and keep them attending. If we do keep our younger Masons working and attending regularly, their obvious interest in and dedication to Masonry is going to arouse the attention of other young and desirable men, causing some to petition that otherwise never would.

Youth in our ranks is important in so many ways.

Younger men, in many respects, make better officers, they learn quickly and more easily, they usually have a more optimistic and ambitious attitude in general, and when this optimism and ambition is imparted to the general membership, things start to happen! We must keep a sizeable percentage of our younger members in the chairs if we hope to grow and prosper. Show me a lodge that has Past Masters in the line offices and I'll show you a lodge that, nine times out of ten, is losing membership and doing very little. I can afford to say these things because I am one of the older Masons that need to let the younger ones carry the ball. We can and should use our older members to good advantage, we need their experience and expertise, but you do not put your oldest tires on the trucks that carry the heaviest and most important loads.

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Attendance is a perpetual problem, one we must work on all year every year. Poor attendance can hurt in so many ways, growth being not the least of these. If a non-Mason has a friend he knows to be a Mason and who never or very seldom attends lodge or other Masonic activities, then that non-Mason is less likely to become interested in Masonry than would be the case if he did not even know a Mason. On the other hand, if your friends and acquaintances respect you and your opinions, and if you faithfully attend your lodge and in other ways demonstrate your dedication to the Fraternity, at least some of those friends and acquaintances will eventually develop an interest in Masonry. So your attendance on your lack of it can help your lodge to grow or it can hold it back, whichever you choose.

What are some other things we can do?

We can use our best efforts to get our absent members back to lodge, providing transportation for them when that is the problem.

We can visit and talk with members about to be excluded for nonpayment of dues, helping to resolve problems or misunderstandings they may have.

We can hold "get acquainted" meetings at the lodge for desirable non-Masons, not boring them with speeches and such, but entertaining them and answering questions they may have.

We can do more to involve our families by having more frequent family oriented events, even bringing our families to the lodge when we are meeting and arranging activities for them in the dining room while the meeting is in progress. This will help attendance and will attract the attention of non-Masonic families.

We can attend each Masonic burial when it is reasonably possible.

There are many other things we can do, some of them more effective in given areas than in others, but the two most important things any Mason can do to keep his lodge and his Fraternity strong and growing are: He can live out of the lodge the kind of life he is taught in it, and he can attend every lodge meeting and other function when it is possible to do so without neglecting his family and other duties.

Can we turn our membership trends around again?
YES WE CAN!

Dedication At Granite Lodge No. 191

Clayton—On September 15 the new temple of Granite Lodge No. 191 was dedicated by Grand Master L. R. Thomas, Jr. He was assisted by the following officers and members of the lodge: Master John P. Tuttle, Jr. (P.M.), Senior Warden Magness M. Price, Junior Warden D. Grey Satterfield, Treasurer Joseph T. Smith (P.M.), Secretary J. Kessler Eason, Senior Deacon J. Douglas Cardineell, III, Junior Deacon Harold E. Rogers, Steward Charles E. Coats, Jr. (P.M.) and Chaplain John P. Tuttle, Sr. (P.M.); Past Masters James W. Stephenson, James F. House, Arthur C. Atkinson and John C. McAdams; members Herbert Nelke, V. Lee Bounds, Allan E. Marshburn and David G. Satterfield, Sr.

Distinguished visitors included Grand Secretary Robert P. Dudley and Grand Chaplain James H. Coile; Past Grand Masters Robert N. Bass, Jr. and A. C. Honeycutt; D.D.G.M. J. Kirby Rose (27), D.D.G.L. Bobby F. Wellons (27) and Assistant Grand Secretary T. Walton Clapp, III.

Non-Masons were admitted for the dedication and everyone present was welcomed by the Master, John Tuttle, Jr. and by D.D.G.M. Rose. Mrs. Cleve Wall provided music for the ceremony. The ancient ceremony of dedication was conducted by the Grand Master, who also delivered the oration.

Mathias To Be Inducted Into DeMolay Hall of Fame

Kansas City, Missouri—Former Olympian Bob Mathias will be inducted into the International DeMolay Hall of Fame at the 1989 Hall of Fame Banquet, April 14, in Kansas City, Missouri. The banquet is a part of a weekend long convention which marks the 70th anniversary of DeMolay International.

Mathias, initiated into Tulare Chapter in 1945, was an outstanding track and field athlete who won the decathlon championship at the 1948 Olympic Games in London. He repeated the achievement four years later at Helsinki, Finland.

Questions and Answers

The Grand Lodge Constitution and Regulations (THE CODE) spell out the Masonic law that governs lodges and Masons in North Carolina. Copies of THE CODE are furnished each lodge, individual members may purchase copies through their lodge secretaries (\$10.00). The answers to the following questions are brief, they are subject to error; and they are unofficial; they are intended only for general information. Some members may wish to score themselves in their knowledge of Masonic law with their answers to these questions. The answer follows each question.

1. Must a member vote upon a petitioner or an issue of whom or which he knows nothing?

Answer: No one can be excused from voting upon a petition, or upon any other decision taken by secret ballot, but the Master may—for good cause—excuse a member from voting when it is not a secret ballot. REG. 71-03.

2. When electing officers, if "A" receives sixteen votes for Senior Warden and "B" receives thirteen, and if there are four blank ballots, neither "A" nor "B" having received a majority of the thirty-three votes cast, must there be a rebalot?

Answer: No "A" wins the election. Blank pieces of paper may not be counted as ballots, so "A" has received a majority of the twenty-nine ballots that may be counted. REGS. 71-07 and 71-08.

3. Can the Master call for a standing vote?

Answer: No. REG. 71 01 says quite plainly that only three methods of voting may be employed; by show of hands, by written paper ballot, and by secret ballot.

4. If a petition is read from a man of somewhat shady reputation, shouldn't the Master be able to call for a "show of hands" in order to determine if it is worthwhile to put the lodge to all the trouble that will be involved if the petition is received?

Answer: No. Again THE CODE is specific. REG. 76-31 states you cannot hold any kind of vote for that purpose, nor can you employ any other means to achieve that end. However, if the Master or the lodge believes the petitioner is morally unfit, then either the Master or the lodge can refuse to entertain the petition, and order it returned to the petitioner. REG. 73-10.

5. If several members present request it, can you use the secret ballot to determine if lodge funds shall be spent to purchase a new heating system?

Answer: (Boy! We certainly are not dealing with any gray areas this month.) The answer is no. Here again the law is right to the point. REG. 71 16 says you cannot in any way whatever require more than a majority vote of the members present to transact any financial or other business matter, and a secret ballot, of course, requires a unanimous vote. So you Masons that decided to watch television instead of going to lodge, TAKE CARE! Just imagine a stated communication of your lodge at which only the bare minimum of seven members are present, and four of those seven voting to spend a large sum of money on some project that would never have been approved if a representative number of the members had been there. It would be perfectly legal. And whose fault would it be?

6. Is it OK to call an emergent communication for the purpose of balloting on petitioners?

Answer: No. Balloting on petitions is one of a number of actions that may be taken only during a regular stated communication. REG. 76-08.

7. I have recently been informed it is all right to make a brief talk in favor of a petitioner about to be voted upon. Is this true?

Answer: You have been misinformed. Your informer must have had reference to REG. 76-08, which permits brief explanatory remarks just prior to balloting, but explanatory remarks could not be for or against the petitioner, but would serve only to dispel confusion, in this manner: "This petitioner is the John Doe that lives on Elm Street, not the one that lives on Maple," or: "This is the John Doe that sells insurance, not the one that has an electrical shop." The very next regulation, 76-09, forbids any debate in open lodge upon the merits or demerits of the petitioner at, before, or after the time of balloting.

8. Under what circumstances is a written ballot required?

Answer: When electing officers, when the Master orders it, when at least two members demand it, or when otherwise required by law. REG. 71-03.

9. When electing officers, is it possible to stuff the ballot?

Answer: Not if the Master, the Secretary and the tellers are on the ball. The tellers, in the first place, should take care not to accept more than one ballot at the time from any member. The Master and the Secretary should have ascertained how many eligible voters are present, then they should make certain the total ballots cast for any office do not exceed that number. REG. 71-09.

10. Are there any circumstances under which a visitor may vote?

Answer: None. REG. 71-14.

Please remember that answers in this column are always unofficial.



Kannapolis—Millard J. Query, at right above, receives Life Membership award in Cannon Memorial Lodge No. 626 from John L. Goodnight, who presented it on behalf of the lodge. Query, a resident of Route 3, China Grove, is a retired supervisor at Fieldcrest Cannon. A Past Master of the lodge, he is a certified lecturer and has served as District Deputy Grand Lecturer and has been conducting Masonic Burials for lodges in the district during the past eighteen years.

What Masons Were Doing . . .

Fifty Years Ago, in 1938:

The delegates to Grand Lodge approved a budget that reflected the austerity of the times. The Grand Secretary was to be paid \$3,600 annually and was afforded \$3,450 with which to operate his office. A little over \$300 was allocated for out-of-state travel. The annual communication was projected to cost \$1,480. The estimated income of \$87,188.50 was to come chiefly from the \$2.50 per capita tax on 26,888 Masons.

Grand Secretary John H. Anderson was appointed to represent the Grand Lodge at the "Communication of the Bicentenary of the Establishment of Freemasonry in Canada." This was to be held at two cities in Canada on July 10, 11, 12, 1938. (It probably took a sizeable chunk out of the \$300 allocated for out-of-state travel.)

The Grand Lecturer in 1938 was Z. V. Snipes, of Dunn. We didn't have D.D.G.L.'s in those days, but we did have four Assistant Grand Lecturers: P. C. Stott, J. W. Patton, J. F. Marquette and W. D. Wilder. Percy Stott is remembered by many of our older members as the blind Past Master of Wendell Lodge No. 565. Despite his blindness, Percy had the uncanny ability to correct the position in which you were holding yourself, or to determine if you had your staff with you, and to detect various other errors one might think a blind person could not perceive.

Twenty-Five Years Ago, in 1963:

Finances had improved during the past quarter-century, and membership had increased. Per capita tax was still \$2.50 but now it was being paid on 63,531 members for a total of \$158,827.50. This, along with other increased funds, boosted the total income to \$210,310.29—over 140% better than 1938.

The Committee on Unfinished Business reported that there was no unfinished business; the Committee on Masonic Ceremonies reported it had restricted its activities during the year (which meant it didn't have anything to do either).

In those days, the Grand Master could present five Joseph Montfort Medals (that number has now been reduced to three.) The 1963 recipients were Thomas Earl Doss, Grand Secretary and Past Grand Master of Tennessee; James Woodrow Brewer, Past Grand Master; Lloyd Woodley, Past Master and Secretary of Southern Pines Lodge No. 484; Reuben Barnitz, Past Master and Secretary of Mount Vernon Lodge No. 118; Herbert Noble, Past Master of John A. Nichols Lodge No. 150.

Ten Years Ago, in 1978:

Cecil Winslow was D.D.G.M. in the 1st District and Early Swanson held that post in the 65th. Cecil lived in Hertford and Early was in Hayesville, and it's a hard day's drive from one to the other—in either direction. But if you really wanted to make a trip of it, you could go on out to Ocracoke, where Irvin "Sea Cap'n" Garrish was residing in the 3rd.

Total annual receipts were now up to \$285,260.52. Per capita had increased to \$3.50 and membership was approaching 71,000. It was costing \$54,000.00 a year to publish the North Carolina Mason, but postage increases (no other publishing costs have risen) have caused that figure to far more than double just ten years later.

Grand Master Earl Watson, in his report to the Grand Lodge, commented on his debt to the many Masons that assisted him in the District Meetings. What he didn't report was that just before one of those meetings he took a bad fall and severely injured his leg, but that he courageously went on to the meeting scheduled for that evening and to all the others, painfully climbing countless hundreds of steps. (The leg injury still bothers him today.)

From the Lodges

Sneads Ferry—Stump Sound Lodge No. 733 will host the 9th District Visitation on October 28 (lodges in the district host the others on a rotating basis to coordinate activities, administer their scholarship program and engage in fellowship). — *Stump Sound Bulletin*

Greensboro—Gate City Lodge No. 694 recently honored two members: H. J. Christenson, P.M., was named "Honorary Past Secretary" on account of many years service in the southeast corner; Arthur Johnson, P.M., was voted into Life Membership in appreciation of his many years of service. — *Gate City Trestle Board*

Burlington—Wilton Finch, Master of Burlington Lodge No. 721, tore up two efforts before he finally decided how to say what he wanted to say (don't feel badly, Wilton, it happens to me all the time). He then cautioned the members to avoid the easy path of criticizing absent members until they have investigated reasons for absenteeism and had done what they could to remove those reasons. — *Burlington Trestle Board*

Newell—Newell Lodge No. 739 was scheduled to vote October 3 on a proposal to change meeting dates. — *Newell Trestle Board*

Greensboro—Past Masters of the 36th District filled the chairs to confer the 3° on September 19 in Guilford Lodge No. 656. — *Guilford Trestle Board*

Thomasville—The Master of Thomasville Lodge No. 214, Bobby Robbins and his wife, Barbara, prepared and served dinner to the members just prior to a 3° on August 16. — *Thomasville Trestle Board*

Fayetteville—Phoenix Lodge No. 8 has just about reached its goal of \$5,000.00 for the Orphanage and is now embarking upon its drive for the Home. — *Phoenix Bulletin*

Charlotte—The quarterly district meeting of the 42nd District was held September 18 at West Gate Lodge No. 738. Lodge officers attending were briefed as to dates of coming events and various matters were discussed. — *James B. White, D.D.G.M.-42*